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LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Western Hemisphere Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Argentina: Curbing the Right?

Presidential adviser Jose Lopez Rega's efforts to tone down officially inspired violence, while designed to calm widespread fears, are also aimed at staving off resentment of his rapidly growing power.

In a well publicized reception at his office, Lopez Rega gave his personal assurance to a group of actors who had been threatened by the right-wing Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance that this "terrorist group" will be investigated and destroyed. The organization is thought to have at least the tacit approval of military and government officials, possibly including Lopez Rega himself.

The following day, probably at Lopez Rega's urging, the alliance issued a communique to a Buenos Aires English-language newspaper, announcing a three-month moratorium on its executions. The announcement said that ninety days is a "reasonable time in which to create, adjust, and correct the means to fight the Marxist guerrillas."

Lopez Rega seeks not only to calm fears among Argentines and the foreign business community of continuing warfare between the right and left. The call for a reduction of semi-official violence also is an effort to balance the administration's--and Lopez Rega's--growing authoritarianism. This trend was highlighted by Lopez Rega's recent success in replacing high officials--notably the commander-in-chief of the army and the economy minister--with men more to his liking.

If Lopez Rega indeed controls or influences the Anti-Communist Alliance, his call for a stand-down on its activities seems designed to win points for the government while making it clear to the left that renewed attacks against it are not ruled out. If the left responds by

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reducing its level of activity for a time, Lopez Rega will have created the impression that the government in general and he in particular can deal successfully with extremists of both the left and right.

If, on the other hand, the right should feel obliged to abandon the moratorium because of further leftist provocation, Lopez Rega will still be ahead. Continued violence will only point up the need for more government powers to deal with the threat and Lopez Rega's gesture will appear to have been an innovative approach to the problem of violence. 3.5(c)

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